

**Claims:**

1. (Currently Amended) A computer-based method for maximizing redemption award units in an award program, the method for implementation in a system that includes at least a central processing unit ("CPU"), an input/display device under at least partial CPU control, and a storage device at least under partial CPU control, the method comprising the steps of:

- (a) storing in the storage device at least one predetermined award unit level for which the award program will issue an award program participant an award;
- (b) storing in the storage device a shortfall percentage;
- (c) each award program participant being permitted to accumulate a number award units earned by performing acts under the award program for which predetermined numbers of award units will be awarded;
- (d) inputting with the input/display device into the system the number of award units accumulated at step (c) for each award program participant;
- (e) storing separately in the storage device for each of the award program participants the number of accumulated award units input at step (d);
- (f) redeeming an award program award including the substeps of,
  - (1) retrieving from the storage device a predetermined award unit level for which a participant may redeem accumulated award units to receive a particular award;
  - (2) retrieving from the storage device the accumulated award unit total for an award program participant requesting to redeem an award according to the predetermined award unit level stored in the storage device at step (a);
  - (3) comparing under CPU control the retrieved predetermined award unit level with the retrieved accumulated award unit total for an award program participant requesting to redeem the award, and determining if the retrieved accumulated award unit total is less than the retrieved predetermined award unit level, and if the retrieved accumulated award unit total is less than the retrieved predetermined award unit level go to substep (f)(4);

(4) determining under CPU control if the retrieved accumulated award unit total is equal to, or greater than, the shortfall percentage multiplied by the retrieved predetermined award unit level, and if the retrieved accumulated award unit total is equal to, or greater than, the product of the retrieved accumulated award unit total multiplied by the predetermined award unit total go to substep (f)(6)(5);

~~(6)(5)~~ determine determining under CPU control a number of award units that the retrieved accumulated award unit total is less than the predetermined award unit level;

~~(7)(6)~~ under CPU control multiplying the number of award units that the retrieved accumulated award unit total is less than the predetermined award unit level by a multiplication factor and determining a monetary amount; and

~~(8)(7)~~ redeeming an award based on a redemption of the retrieved accumulated award unit total with the monetary amount determined a substep ~~(f)(7)(6)~~.

2. (Original) The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the multiplication factor is the same for each retrieved accumulated award unit total that is less than the predetermined award unit level.

3. (Original) The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the multiplication factor is different for at least two of the retrieved accumulated award unit total that are less than the predetermined award unit level.

4. (Original) The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the multiplication factor is weighted based on the number of award units that the retrieved accumulated award unit total ~~that~~ is less than the predetermined award level.

5. (Original) The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the multiplication factor is selected by chance.

6. (Currently Amended) A computer-based method for maximizing redemption award units in an award program, the method for implementation in a system that includes at least a central processing unit ("CPU"), an input/display device under at least partial CPU control, and a storage device at least under partial CPU control, the method comprising the steps of:

(a) storing in the storage device at least one predetermined award unit level for which the award program will issue an award program participant an award;

- (b) storing in the storage device a shortfall percentage;
- (c) each award program participant being permitted to accumulate a number award units earned by performing acts under the award program for which predetermined numbers of award units will be awarded;
- (d) inputting with the input/display device into the system the number of award units accumulated at step (c) for each award program participant;
- (e) storing separately in the storage device for each of the award program participants the number of accumulated award units input at step (d);
- (f) redeeming an award program award including the substeps of,
  - (1) retrieving from the storage device a predetermined award unit level for which a participant may redeem accumulated award units to receive a particular award;
  - (2) retrieving from the storage device the accumulated award unit total for an award program participant requesting to redeem an award according to the predetermined award unit level stored in the storage device at step (a);
  - (3) comparing under CPU control the retrieved predetermined award unit level with the retrieved accumulated award unit total for an award program participant requesting to redeem the award, and determining if the retrieved accumulated award unit total is less than the retrieved predetermined award unit level, and if the retrieved accumulated award unit total is less than the retrieved predetermined award unit level go to substep (f)(4) and if the retrieved accumulated award unit total is equal, to, or greater than, the retrieved predetermined award unit level go to substep (f)(9)(8);
  - (4) determining under CPU control if the retrieved accumulated award unit total is equal to, or greater than, the shortfall percentage multiplied by the retrieved predetermined award unit level, and if the retrieved accumulated award unit to is equal to, or greater than, the product of the retrieved accumulated award unit total multiplied by the predetermined award unit total go to substep (f)(6)(5) and if it is less than the product of the retrieved accumulated award total multiplied by the predetermined award unit level ~~if go to~~ then restoring the retrieved accumulated award unit total in the storage device;

~~(6)~~(5) ~~determine~~ determining under CPU control a number of award units that the retrieved accumulated award unit total is less than the predetermined award unit level;

~~(7)~~(6) under CPU control multiplying the number of award units that the retrieved accumulated award unit total is less than the predetermined award unit level by a multiplication factor and determining a monetary amount;

~~(8)~~(7) redeeming an award based on a redemption of the retrieved accumulated award unit total with the monetary amount determined a substep (f)~~(7)~~(6); and

~~(9)~~(8) redeeming an award based on the redemption of the retrieved accumulated award unit total equal to the predetermined award unit level, and under CPU control storing in the storage device a number of accumulated award units less the amount of the accumulated award units redeemed.

7. (Original) The method as recited in claim 6, wherein the multiplication factor is the same for each retrieved accumulated award unit total that is less than the predetermined award unit level.

8. (Original) The method as recited in claim 6, wherein the multiplication factor is different for at least two of the retrieved accumulated award unit total that are less than the predetermined award unit level.

9. (Original) The method as recited in claim 6, wherein the multiplication factor is weighted based on the number of award units that the retrieved accumulated award unit total that is less than the predetermined award level.

10. (Original) The method as recited in claim 6, wherein the multiplication factor is selected by chance.